

Canadian
Pamphlets

Smith, Goldwin.

The relations between America and England.



Amfr.
Eng. Hist.

*Profrper froft
with L. Smith's Compliments*

THE RELATIONS
BETWEEN
AMERICA AND ENGLAND,
AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE CITIZENS OF ITHACA, BY

GOLDWIN SMITH,

May 19, 1869.



G. C. BRAGDON, PUBLISHER, ITHACA, N. Y.

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P R E F A C E .

The author of the following address has been blamed for having allowed himself to be alarmed at the aspect of affairs.

The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations seemed to speak the mind of the Senate and the nation ; and had his speech been followed by action in the shape of a pressure of his demands, as the answer of Great Britain could not be doubtful, the danger of a rupture of friendly relations between the two countries would have been serious.

An Englishman resident in America may be an imperfect judge of the indications of American feeling ; but he has the advantage of knowing something of both sides : and the danger was to be measured, not by the feelings or intentions of the American people alone, but by these combined with the general temper and present mood of the powerful nation against which Mr. Sumner's speech was made.

"I know," says Mr. Sumner, "it is sometimes said that war between us must come, sooner or later." The numbers and influence of the party to which the orator alludes are not likely to have decreased since his eloquence has implanted the sense of immeasurable and almost inexpiable wrong in the heart of a mighty nation, recently made conscious of the power of its arms. "There are many among us," he says in another place, "who, taking counsel of a sense of national wrong, would leave the claims to rest without settlement, so as to furnish a precedent for retaliation in kind should England find herself at war." It is obvious that such an issue of the negotiations, which Mr. Sumner's speech has rendered far more probable than it was before, would be nothing but war deferred.

Nations very seldom wish for war. They are drawn, through diplomatic complications and under the influence of excited feelings, into situations in which war becomes inevitable. "We are drifting towards war," was the memorable expression of an English minister on the brink of our war with Russia—a war from which we might have been saved, if, when we were beginning to be drawn into the fatal current, the conse-

quences of indulging prejudice and allowing passion to break control could have been distinctly presented to the minds of both the parties to the quarrel.

In the Address, arbitration is advocated as the mode of settling the Alabama claims. It seems to be now the only mode. But most heartily does the writer wish that the English government, without waiting for a dispute to begin, had secured the one object worth securing, by going straight to the heart of the American people.

One word of personal explanation must be added. The impression appears to prevail in some quarters that the author of the address is receiving a salary as Professor in an American University; whence it is inferred that he has lost his right to speak as an Englishman, and to plead the cause of England. He is receiving no salary or emolument whatever. His connection with the Cornell University, though greatly prized and cherished by him, is merely honorary, and can in no way interfere with his nationality or his allegiance. His position is simply that of an Englishman residing in the United States for literary purposes, and enjoying, in common with many other foreigners, the temporary protection of American law.

ADDRESS.

Your presence here this evening, my American friends, sanctions what perhaps on my part is rather a rash undertaking. I stand before you as an Englishman loyal to England, though not to the England of the aristocracy, but to the England of the people. But, at the same time, perhaps no living Englishman has more reason than I have to be grateful and attached to America. In truth, in pleading against a rupture of the friendly relations between the two countries, I am pleading not only for public interests and the interests of humanity, but for the continuance in my own case of a cherished connection, with happy prospects of usefulness, in the service of an institution for which I anticipate as long and as noble a life in the future as that of my own English college in the past. I am pleading, I might almost say, for my own home.

If there is any particular class in the country to which I have a right to speak in behalf of the same class in England, perhaps it is the class of artisans. I went with the artisans in England through the American conflict, and, for having done so, received proofs of their good will. The artisan class has, no doubt, many political faults; but I should say there is no class to which you can speak with more hope of being understood on questions of international morality. The workingmen feel the unity of labor, and through the unity of labor the unity of mankind. As a political class they have grown up to some extent outside the old semi-feudal traditions, and are heirs, as it were, of a new covenant; whereas the old political classes are too familiar with the habit of going to church to worship the God of Peace, Charity and Forgiveness and coming away to worship a different divinity in the temples of public life. Moreover, it is on the working classes that the real burden of war falls. The working classes in England are even now bearing the burden of our long French war. To great capitalists, as well as to great moralists and patriots, war is often highly profitable. I was not long ago in a city where I was told that after a war so many people had set up two-horse carriages that the number had increased five-fold. Labor does not set up a two-horse carriage after a war.

It would be well if, before any country went to war, the question could be formally submitted to the reason and conscience of the whole people, and if the ministers of religion, or the moral guides of the community, whoever they may be, could be required solemnly to declare that in their judgment there was no other mode of obtaining redress for wrong. But, at all events, nations ought as much as possible to lay their minds and hearts together, and understand each other as thoroughly as they can before they allow themselves to be drawn by warlike politicians and orators

into shedding each other's blood. The politicians and orators do not face the shot themselves; they remain at home, enjoying increased popularity and louder applause, while the people, by thousands and hundreds of thousands, rot in the plague-stricken camp, or are mangled on fields of battle. In former times, when kings and nobles led their own armies to the field, the issues of peace and war were in the hands of men of war, who at least risked their own lives, and who, being brave, were sometimes humane. Now the issues of peace and war are in the hands of men of peace, who are too often bellicose in proportion to the pacific character of their professions and their personal lack of military prowess.

In every nation there are men and parties inclined to war, or to a course of policy which points to war. There are soldiers looking for glory, and sailors looking not only for glory, but for prize-money. There are commercial monopolists, like the old Corn law party in England, whose instinct tells them that the best security for monopoly is the estrangement of nations. There are courtiers who subsist upon the passions of kings, or demagogues who subsist upon the passions of the people, and to whom it is a necessity that those passions should always be kept, on some pretence or other, at fever heat. I do not accuse any human being of being so wicked as actually to wish for war; but I say that there are some against whose natural tendencies the community at large ought to be on its guard. In England there is a party, that of the Tory aristocracy, which is now depressed, and is likely to be still more so, and to which a rupture with America would be political salvation. John Bright could not and would not remain in office to carry on a war against this country. He and his friends who are now in the Government would go out. The Tories would come into power and wield all the resources of the united British nation in a death-struggle with American Democracy.

It is evident that, to see this question in a fair light, we must clear our minds of national antipathy on both sides. It is painful to me, and I am almost ashamed, being personally surrounded as I am with courtesy and kindness, even to refer to the existence of such a feeling. But I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that it does exist here as well as in England. In both countries it springs, I suppose, partly from that old quarrel, which is so dead that it ought by this time to be buried, and in which at the time the English people, who were then ruled by a demented King and a narrow oligarchy, had really no concern: partly from a difference of institutions, which, perhaps, will not last long and which, while it lasts, is merely the law of history; mainly, as I believe from each nation's ignorance of the other. We have had only too abundant proof of the ignorance of America prevalent in England. I read the other day in an American journal of the highest eminence, and one which I believe is an excellent exponent of popular feeling, an article giving the statistics of English pauperism, which are at present terribly high, the evil having been aggravated of late by circumstances over which we had no control, and among them, by the long stoppage of our chief industry, in consequence of the cotton famine caused by your civil war. The article concluded with these words: "It is a difficult matter to deal with beggars, except in a way likely to com-

mend itself to English human nature—kicking them down stairs or up the area steps—but this summary method will not decrease beggary nor prevent pauperism. Poverty is never a blessing in disguise, and pauperism is a curse to any nation. As there might be some objections, on the ground of morals, to gathering all the paupers in the kingdom into a bag and throwing them into the sea, some more feasible plan must be found. What this shall be we leave to the English themselves, and they certainly cannot complain of a lack of the raw material upon which to experiment.” I do not think I exceed the truth in saying that the writer of this feels that his readers will not be very deeply grieved by the prevalence of want and misery among the English people. If he had seen the public charities of England, or knew their amount in London alone, I venture to say he would admit that kicking the poor from the door or throwing them into the sea is not the way of disposing of them most congenial to English human nature. If he went among English statesmen and Englishmen generally he would find this sad problem of pauperism pressing on all minds and hearts, as some day, when this country is densely peopled, it may press on yours.

It is the fixed belief of a great part of the world that England is a highly aggressive power, and that you have always to be on your guard against her extending herself by force or fraud, and even to aggress yourself that you may forestall her aggression. In former times, when conquest was the highest work of rulers, and the maxim was that all should take who had the power and all should keep who could, England both took more and kept more than her rivals, not because she was more rapacious than the France of Louis XIV, or the Spain of Philip II, or the Prussia of Frederick the Great, or the Russia of Catherine, but because her warriors and her mariners and her statesmen possessed the superior vigor which from them has passed to you. Thus it was that this continent became the heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race. But now that sounder principles have prevailed, and we have all renounced territorial aggrandizement, England is as unaggressive as her neighbors; indeed I believe it may be affirmed with truth that she has taken the lead in a policy of moderation. She voluntarily ceded the Ionian Islands, the other great powers who had put them into her hands, being, as it was understood, not very favorable to the cession; and I doubt whether you will find a parallel to this act of hers in history. She is thinking of ceding even that which is at once the great trophy and the reputed talisman of her empire—the rock of Gibraltar; and this, I believe, not merely from a sense of its diminished value, but from right feeling and a sincere desire to be on friendly terms with Spain. The conquest of Abyssinia for the purpose of liberating the captives was followed by its instant evacuation. We were charged the other day by a speaker at a Cretan meeting with thwarting the emancipation of Crete by Russia because we had designs on Egypt. Both Egypt and Crete were offered to us by the late Emperor of Russia as the price of our connivance at his designs, and we not only refused the offer, but quarreled with him for having made it. You understand I suppose what is meant by Canadian Confederation. India we cannot resign without abandoning it to anarchy, for there is no pow-

er that can rule that vast and motley group of nations but ourselves. The feeling is growing, however, that it is a burden, though a burden which we cannot now lay down. Soon, to all appearances, the tale of British Empire will have been told! The morning gun of England will no longer everywhere greet the rising sun. To borrow an image from Turner's famous picture, which I have lately had before my eyes, the old Temeraire will be towed to her last moorings, her thunders silent, her fighting done. Her record is not stainless; but she has often borne your liberties through storm and battle in her war-scarred and weather-beaten side.

There are some, it seems, who wish to press demands on England with a view to annexing at once her Canadian and West Indian possessions; and this proposal, coming simultaneously with claims for reparation in the court of high morality and honor, will rather confuse the minds of our people. I have earned, at the price of some obloquy, the right of saying that I am sincere in wishing that Great Britain and all the Powers of the Old World should take their departure from the New World, and leave the destinies of the New World to their own course. England has done all the good that she can do in planting her race and her free institutions here. She has reaped all the honor that she can reap, and that honor will not die. Dismember her empire, destroy her fleets and armies, ruin her trade, do to her everything of which revenge can dream; she can never be deprived of the glory of having founded you.

The West Indian possessions were offered to you by Cromwell, and would that you had accepted them. To us they have been a curse from the beginning. The gold which some of our people drew from them in the days of Slavery was demon gold—it filled our politics and our society with corruption. Since the abolition of Slavery the islands have been a mere burden to us; they have been much worse; Jamaica has brought upon English justice a stain far worse than any loss of territory or any defeat in war. We could not allow them to pass out of our hands while there was any fear lest slavery should be restored. But now, I believe, the great majority of Englishmen would agree in saying that if we could be honorably rid of the whole group, with their populations, black and white, with all their barbarisms and internecine hatreds, the loss would be a boundless gain. With regard to Canada, the attitude of England is not doubtful. She says plainly to the Canadians, your destinies are in your own hands, and if you wish to stay with me I am proud of your attachment, and no act of mine shall sever the bond; if you prefer independence, independence is yours; if you desire to go into the Union, go, and preserve in your new estate kind memories of old ties and of your fatherland. As to ceding them, or any of her citizens, by way of compounding for her own liabilities, it is a thought which honor would forbid her for a moment to entertain. I believe I know enough of the Canadians to say that they do not like to be threatened with annexation;—that for some political and fiscal reasons, and also because, in Upper Canada at least, they are rather stiff Anglo-Saxons, they prefer to remain as they are. They feel the rule of their parent not oppressive, because, like other American children, they rule her. Nevertheless, the day will no

doubt come when these vast and distant territories will cease to belong to that little island; and when geography and commercial interest will in this, as in other cases, assert their power. But if the Canadians are prematurely forced into the Union they will carry disaffection into its vitals, combine with every other disaffected element which may now exist or which time may develope, and instead of being an addition to your strength, be an aggravation of your weakness.

Again, there are some who wish to make a crusade for the rescue of Ireland. It would be too much to say that the age of crusades is past. Only let it be a crusade, not a strategical operation. Let not Ireland be again made the cover for a shot at England, and then abandoned to the rage of the wounded lion. Spain made a crusade for Ireland, and the consequence was the great Tudor conquests and confiscations. The French Republicans made a crusade for Ireland, and the consequence was the Reign of Terror of 1798. One of your most distinguished orators and philanthropists says that if England interferes with his plans of benevolence (which I hope she is not so impious as to think of doing), he will make Ireland his Gibraltar, and encamp at Dublin with 20,000 men. We had a distinguished philanthropist in England, a disciple of Bentham, who taught that in all things we ought to aim at the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and one day we received the news that this philanthropist, who held a post in China, having had his philosophic temper ruffled by the retrograde barbarians there, was throwing bomb-shells into Canton, where, as it is the most densely peopled city in the world, the greatest possible number would participate in the happiness. But the question is, when you have encamped at Dublin with your 20,000 men, as you cannot stay there forever, what will you leave behind. Bonaparte said to the Directory, when they had set the island on fire with a war of races, "The Irish have created a diversion for us; what more do you want with them?" Meantime this oratory tells; it does not evoke any serious attempt to make Ireland independent, but it fills the Island with conspiracy and assassination; it baffles the efforts of the English Liberals under Gladstone and Bright to unite with them the Irish Liberals in removing such evils as legislation can remove. The division of races and religions, which is the great bane of the country, has its source in remote history, and cannot be removed even by philanthropy, with all its bomb-shells and its 20,000 men. Ireland is not a dependency, like Poland; she has a hundred members in the House of Commons, and if these members will only vote with their friends for the liberties of Ireland, instead of voting against the liberties of Italy, the Church and Land questions will soon be settled in the interest of justice. The only grievance which will then remain will be the Union itself. Here again, I may say that I have earned the right to speak as one who, under Bright and Cobden, and other good guides, has tried at least to look beyond the territorial aggrandizement of England, and to desire for her only that greatness which is compatible with justice. If I really believed that Ireland could be happier as an independent State, I, as an Englishman, would vote for her independence. But besides the evils of the unfriendly relations that would probably sub-

sist between the two divorced kingdoms, I must say that I have never seen proposed, nor can I myself conceive a Government to which the Protestant Saxon of the North and the Catholic Celt of the South would equally yield allegiance. It seems to me that another struggle of races and religions would almost certainly ensue; that the vanquished would call in foreign aid, and that the tragedy of Irish history would be acted over again. Humanity claims fair play for the Liberal statesmen of both England and Ireland, who say "Before we have recourse to a revolution, let us try the effect of thorough-going justice."

Mr. Sumner's speech has, I presume, rendered the renewal of negotiations for the present almost impossible; at least, they can scarcely be renewed on the side of England. Meantime, by that speech, and by the other demonstrations which it has called forth, a state of feeling has been engendered in which incidents, which would otherwise be harmless, may lead to mischief, especially while the sparks are flying from the Cuban conflagration. We never believe that war is coming till it comes; and even now, while we are all saying that the apprehension is absurd, the Angel of Death may be setting his mark with unseen hand on the door of many an American and English home. Let us then at least banish rhetoric, and try to look at the grounds and sources of the quarrel, with a full sense of their gravity, and of the deep sense of wrong rankling in the heart of the American people, but at the same time in a sober way.

Mr. Sumner accuses England of having taken part with Slavery. This is evidently with him the head and front of her offending; it lends a criminal hue to all her actions in his eyes; he imports it into questions of international law, where, I submit, considerations of sentiment have no place. The anti-Slavery sentiment is, in fact, almost his international law. The question of Slavery has been his one great question, and for him it fills the whole moral sphere. He can make no excuse for those who are not in perfect sympathy with him on this subject. "Not to blast," he says, "is to bless," and to bless is to lay yourself open to the most unmeasured and the most conjectural imputations. Some time ago he made and published a great speech on your Foreign Relations, which was the precursor and almost the first draft of his recent speech in the Senate. In that speech he calls the confederation of the Slave States "*a Magnum Latrocinium*, whose fellowship can have nothing but the filthiness of evil," "a mighty house of ill-fame," "an Ishmael," "a brood of harpies defiling all which it cannot steal," "a one-eyed Cyclops of Nations," "a soulless monster of Frankenstein," "a wretched creation of mental science without God." "Who" he proceeds, "can welcome such a creation? who can consort with it? There is something loathsome in the idea. There is contamination even in the thought. If you live with the lame, says the ancient proverb, you will learn to limp; if you keep in the kitchen you will smell of smoke; if you touch pitch, you will be defiled. But what lameness so pitiful as that of this pretended Power! what smoke so foul as its breath! what pitch so defiling as its touch! It is an Oriental saying, that a cistern of rose water will become impure if a dog is dropped into

it; but a continent of rose water, with Rebel slave mongers, would be changed into a vulgar puddle. Imagine, if you please, whatever is most disgusting, and this pretended power is more disgusting still. Naturalists report that the pike will swallow anything except the toad; but this it cannot do; the experiment has been tried, and though this fish, in its voracity, always gulps whatever is thrown to it, yet invariably it spews this nuisance from its throat. But our slave-monger pretension is worse than the toad; and yet there are foreign nations which instead of spewing it forth, are already turning it, like a precious morsel, on the tongue." "Œdipus," he goes on to say, "in the saddest tale of antiquity, weds his own mother without knowing it; but England will wed the slave power, with full knowledge that the relation, if not incestuous, is vile." And then; "The foul attorneys of the slave-monger power, reeking with Slavery, will have their letters of license, as the ambassadors of Slavery to rove from court to court over foreign carpets, talking, drinking, spitting Slavery, and poisoning that air which has been nobly pronounced too pure for a slave to breathe." He is not content with the refusal of England to recognize the Confederacy; he insists that she shall refuse by proclamation, so as to put the Confederates on the footing of a Cain among the nations, and every moment of hesitation to issue such a proclamation he denounces as a moment of apostacy. I have said that this speech on Foreign Relations was the prototype of the speech on the Alabama Treaty. This is the frame of mind in which Mr. Sumner was when he formed his opinion of these international questions, and determined in effect to place the two nations in their present critical position. It seems a frame of mind rather morally exalted than judicial, and not one in which a man is likely to weigh in a fair balance either the actions or the motives of those who have crossed him, or even disappointed him by their lack of ardent sympathy in the great mission of his life.

It is to true that our aristocracy and plutocracy, or at least a part of them, in their fellow feeling with the aristocracy here, forgot the anti-Slavery principles which are a proud part of the escutcheon of England, and for which England has not only paid much gold, but offered up many a gallant life, not on glittering fields of battle, but on the path of obscure duty, beneath the deadly African sun and dew, in our long crusade against the slave trade. I fought these men hard; I believed, and believe now, that their defeat was essential to the progress of civilization. But I dare say we should have done pretty much as they did, if we had been born members of a privileged order, instead of being brought up under the blessed influence of equality and justice. Nor do I see how, while we claim for ourselves the right of sympathizing with rebellions in favor of democracy, such as those of Hungary, Poland and Italy, we can deny to the aristocratic party the right of sympathizing with rebellions in favor of aristocracy. The people of England on the other hand did not forget or renounce their anti-Slavery principles, though a good many of them who were strongly opposed to Slavery failed to see that Slavery was the real issue. Their mistake was pardonable. This great revolution, like most great revolutions, passed through several phases, and the

first phase, which settled the bias of common minds, was not anti-Slavery. After the war had fairly begun Mr. Seward sent to Mr. Adams in the name of Mr. Lincoln a manifesto in the form of instructions declaring that Slavery was not attacked or threatened, and that from the nature of your Government, and the physical and social arrangements of this continent it was impossible that Slavery ever should be attacked or threatened; and he directed Mr. Adams distinctly not to claim the sympathy of Great Britain on the moral ground. When the abolition of Slavery came as the final result of the war all England rejoiced; no man dared to show himself a mourner at the funeral of Slavery.

England is always assumed to have gone wrong in the lump. The more discriminating allow that there were two or three laudable but impotent exceptions. I saw two or three myself, for I was present when John Bright made his great American speech, the greatest of all his speeches, in St. James' Hall, which, I believe, holds about 4,000 persons, and at a meeting in the Free Trade Hall, at Manchester, when a still larger number were present. We held mass meetings with success in all the great centres; the other party hardly ventured to hold any. Such a struggle as this, embracing the whole world in its issues and effects, could not fail to give rise to violent divisions of sentiment in other countries. The Southern party was strong, of course, among the wealthier classes of England, in the high-priced journals which are published for that class, and in Parliament which, the suffrage not having at that time been extended, was aristocratic and plutocratic in its character. But the Southerners though they made a great noise in Parliament, and thus apparently compromised the country, never succeeded in carrying a resolution in favor of the South, though they tried to do so more than once.

When the Emperor of the French, at the lowest point of your fortunes, proposed to our Government interference, under the guise of mediation, the Government, in obedience to the national will, rejected the proposal. We do not claim any gratitude for this rejection or for averting the consequences which would have followed acceptance, because we were fighting for our own cause. But we have a right to ask why Mr. Sumner, in framing his case against us, so carefully avoids any reference to this fact. How would it look in the middle of his indictment? I appeal to your candor and your manly love of justice.

It was not in England only that parties were divided. I do not want to intrude for a moment on your politics. But our people read your journals, and they could not help knowing that the strong things said by our Southern Club against the war and those who were waging it, were only the echoes of the things said by a party here. The most offensive things published in our press were the work of an American and a Northerner—the letters of “Manhattan.”

At the time of your civil war, one-seventh of the adult male population of Great Britain had votes. Now, a much larger number have them. And now John Bright is Minister; Roebuck is turned out of his seat in Parliament, where before he was secure; and Laird escapes narrowly, and only because he is the industrial lord of Birkenhead. Your friends and allies, faithfully adhering to your cause, have shared your victory; they

are in power, and they tender you reparation according to the international creed of their party, by a reference to arbitration, in the matter of the Alabama. Assuredly, if it is moral revenge that you desire on the aristocratic party in England, you have it in overflowing measure. You have it in overflowing measure already, and if war does not arrest our political progress, you will soon have more.

Mr. Sumner lays it to our charge that the Rebellion was originally encouraged by hopes of support from England. No doubt it was. The South thought that Cotton was our king, and that we must come to his standard. We had indeed sometimes whispered fearfully among ourselves of a dearth of Cotton as a calamity almost too terrible to put into words. The announcement of it came to us like the knell of doom. Rather than take part against you, the artisans of England, with their wives and families, faced starvation; and let me say that all parties in England, Southerners as well as Northerners, came forward at once, and with free hands, to support the workmen in the distress which they endured for the cause of the North.

The specific charges now made against us as a nation are, I believe, the premature recognition of belligerency and our failure to arrest the Alabama. I cannot regard as specific, till it is reduced to distinct form and indorsed by responsible authority, the charge of having prolonged the war by our sympathy for two years. Two years from the end of the war take us back to the flood-tide of Confederate success. Is it reasonable to suppose that these men, under such leaders, fighting for such objects, and under such penalties in case of defeat, would have laid down their victorious arms had they not been supported by the sympathy of a nation three thousand miles off, which they knew to be divided in sentiment, which refused to recognize their political existence, which refused an audience to their envoys, which had flatly declined to take part in a mediation in their favour. Let me ask you frankly, would any historical inquirer accept such a theory without strong evidence from Southern archives, or from some other quarter? Again I say I do not wish to intrude for a moment into the domestic politics of this country. But, again, we could not help knowing that the prolonged resistance of the Confederates was in all Republican journals and speeches ascribed to the sympathy of a party here. Assuredly, if the English did prolong the war by sympathy or by any other means, they went strangely counter to their own desires. Dying as they were for cotton, their one unanimous prayer was that the war might end. Some prayed that it might end in favor of the North; others that it might end in favor of the South—but all alike prayed that it might end. I repeat that, though supposed to have been gainers commercially by this quarrel, we were suffering fearfully from it all the time, and are suffering from its consequences at this hour.

As to the recognition of Confederate belligerency, I have, in the first place, again to appeal plainly to your justice. It was not England only that recognized. France recognized at the same time, and other Powers soon after. Why, then, does Mr. Sumner, to whose mind this fact cannot fail to be present, keep France and the other recognizing powers out of sight, and fix the charge and the liability on England alone?

It is alleged that the recognition of belligerency was premature and precipitate. That is the form which the charge usually takes. It is not commonly denied that the time would have come when it would have been necessary for the other governments to treat this as a regular war. But it is said that the time chosen by the British Government (and we must always remember, by the French Government too,) for the step was not the right time, and that the selection of such a time was evidence of unfriendly intentions. Which time then was the right time? I submit that an answer to this question is an essential part of the charge against England; and I have never yet heard an answer given. I thought myself, and have always said, that our Government had better have waited for the arrival of Mr. Adams. But this would have made the difference only of a few days. And the case was really urgent. It was really necessary with as little delay as possible to give our officers in these seas instructions as to permitting British ships to be over-hauled, and generally to lay down the rules incident to a state of war, especially as the connection between the two countries was so close.

The case of your civil war was almost without a parallel in history. Generally speaking, in civil war you have two governments, or at least two party centres, but you have no clear division of territory between the two contending powers. Here, owing to the sharp line drawn by Slavery, you had from the beginning two governments, one legitimate, the other *de facto*, each commanding the complete obedience of its own vast territory, appointing all the officers, whether military or civil, and wielding the entire force of the community for the defence of the soil. I confess I have always felt that the British government in refusing political recognition to the Southern Confederacy after the battle of Fredricksburg gave a decisive proof of its unwillingness to do anything premature.

Mr. Adams, at the time, objected to the recognition, and to a discussion in Parliament which followed it; but he says expressly in his dispatch to Mr. Seward of May 17, 1861, that he is not prepared to state that there is just ground for the idea that either the one or the other is to be taken as evidence of a disposition to chill the hopes of those whom he represented. The whole dispatch is worth reading, if you want to know how rhetoric can pile "Pelion upon Ossa" in the cause of eight years. Mr. Adams lands at Liverpool, the great cotton port and the focus of Southern feeling. He finds opinion there "anxious and fluctuating," and he is told that he might do a good deal to determine it in the right direction by staying for a single day. At London he "has reason to be fully satisfied with the reception he meets from everybody." Any doubt as to his being received as the representative of all the States, loyal and seceding, is at once dispelled. His report on the state of public opinion is that "it is not yet exactly what he could wish, but that much depends upon the course of events in the United States, and the firmness and energy made visible in the direction of affairs." Much, everything, depended at this critical moment on his being able to tell the English people that the North were fighting for the abolition of Slavery; but he was forbidden to tell them this; he was enjoined to assure them of the reverse.

The Union party in England, who watched with keen eyes, as for the

interest of their own cause, never felt that they could object to the recognition of the Confederates as belligerents. Looking to you, we saw that you treated them in all things as belligerents, and the war as a regular war; if you had not done so, the struggle, terrible as it was, would have swallowed up all the horrors in history. You will correct me if I am wrong in saying that the Supreme Court of this country has decided that both on land and sea the civil war was a regular war. I mention it, not to set your own authorities against you, which is an irritating and unmannerly kind of argument, but because the judgments of the Supreme Court of the United States command the respect of the legal world.

However, I do not wish to trench upon the province of the professors of international law. I must leave to them it to decide, among other questions, the question whether there was any established rule or precedent which ought to have led the European Governments to distinguish between belligerent rights on land and belligerent rights on the ocean, and to withhold the latter while they conceded the former; whether such a distinction is practicable, and whether it would be possible to treat a land belligerent who slipped out of a blockaded port as anything but a belligerent at sea. In the absence of any rule or precedent, the failure of the Governments to draw the distinction is surely pardonable, if not blameless. Mr. Sumner, in his speech on Foreign Relations, protests against the concession of belligerency without prize-courts, "especially to Rebel Slavemongers." But this, I submit, is an instance of his habit of introducing the Anti-Slavery sentiment into questions which must be governed strictly by law. If governments were to be outlawed for the badness of their domestic institutions, as the world is full of political contradictions, we should be outlawing each other all round.

My aim is to prove not that the action of the British Government was right, but only that it was not so palpably wrong as to warrant you in imputing bad motives, and putting a criminal construction on all that followed.

That the English nation and the English Government willfully abused their power of recognition for the purposes of a foul conspiracy against the Union, conceived in some bandit's cave of English diplomacy, and secretly supported by a perfidious people, is a notion, which may possibly pass current while you think of an abstract England, the legendary monster of patriotic histories, the stock-in-trade demon of patriotic orations. But who were the members of the English Government? The Liberals were in power, though with a restricted suffrage. Lord Palmerston, the head of the Government, was an aristocrat by nature, and probably his personal sympathies were on the aristocratic side; but as a diplomatist he was the pupil and worshipper of Canning, the real author of the so-called Monroe doctrine; and he had embroiled us with half Europe by the almost fanatical ardor with which he crusaded against the slave trade. Lord Russell was also a hearty opponent of Slavery, and had taken an active part in its abolition, besides being on the Liberal side of every question for forty years. Among the other names—Mr. Gladstone, the Duke of Argyle, the Duke of Newcastle, Mr. Sidney Herbert, Sir G. C. Lewis, Lord Stanley of Alderley, the Duke of Somerset,

Lord Chancellor Campbell, Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Cardwell, Mr. Villiers—to which would you point as that of an enemy of popular government and the rights of labor? I can point to several who were their most sincere and zealous friends. The two names in the list best known here are perhaps that of Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the most powerful member of the Government after Lord Palmerston, and that of the Duke of Newcastle, who was Secretary of State for the Colonies, and came here with the Prince of Wales. Mr. Gladstone is now the chosen ruler of the people. For the people, to lighten the burdens of the people, to improve the lot of the people, to give the people political rights, he has taken up, held, and laid down power. Labor knows his name, and blesses it when it eats its hard-earned bread. European liberty knows his name. Ask any Italian patriot whether Mr. Gladstone could be a conspirator against freedom. He said publicly in an unguarded moment, what the most ardent friends of the Union were saying to each other in private, that Jeff. Davis had succeeded in making the South a nation. And for this single inconsiderate word he has since apologized to you with all the warmth and frankness of his nature. The Duke of Newcastle retained to the end of his life the pleasantest recollections of his reception here, and the kindest feelings toward the country in which he had been so received. I was with him for the last time on the eve of my departure for America, in 1864. He was then dying, and he died before my return. No man was more constant in his feelings and affections. But, above all, he was the soul of honor, and honor itself is impeached, when he is charged with having done anything in a high public trust which could bring a stain upon the good faith of his country.

If explanation of the recognition of belligerency is sought in a friendly spirit, a full and courteous explanation ought to be given conjointly by all the Powers which were parties to the act. To explain an action to a friend can never be inconsistent with true dignity, whether in the case of men or nations. Nor would such a concession to international goodwill trench, it seems to me, on the free exercise of the power of recognition with which, it is agreed, each member of the family of nations must, for the good of all, be entrusted. But if the demand made is that England shall compel her ministers to avow that the Queen's proclamation was not issued in good faith, the answer will be that no nation not utterly lost to honor would yield to such a demand unless reduced to the last extremity by war.

You will not forget, though Mr. Sumner does not advert to it, that England steadily refused to the Confederates political recognition; and Mr. Seward's opinion is on record that the success of the Confederate envoys in Great Britain would probably have rendered their success easy elsewhere.

With regard to the case of the Alabama and her consorts, if any of the other ships really came under the same category, no one has spoken in stronger terms than I have. Mr. Sumner does me the honor to cite my words as a just expression of moral feeling on the subject. I have only to say that those words were not directed against my country or its re-

sponsible Government, but against the builders and abettors of the Alabama. The assertion that the Alabama was sent out by the British nation and Government or with their encouragement or connivance is a calumny which no Englishman would repel more confidently than I should. We have in the narrative of Capt. Semmes an account of all that passed between him and the Confederate Secretary of the Navy about the building of this vessel, and the plan which they formed for eluding what they call the "anxiously guarded neutrality of England"—a neutrality which they on their side seem inclined to think is unduly pressed against them. As the English law plainly forbids equipment, they come to the conclusion that the Alabama must go out unarmed, and run the risk of capture, till she can take on board her armament in some safe port. We know the stratagem by which she contrived to slip out to sea at the very moment when the order for her arrest was on its way. She had got notice of that order, no doubt, through some bribed official, for the consequences of whose treachery the Government which employed him is liable, without being itself tainted with his guilt. Our Government sent after the Alabama to Nassau, whither she was supposed to be bound, and would have arrested her there. But she had gone to the Azores, where she took her armament on board, and whence she set out on her career of devastation; and the Government were advised too technically, as I could not help feeling, that she was thenceforth out of their jurisdiction, and could be lawfully attacked by your cruisers only. It is unhappily the fact that most of her crew were Englishmen by birth; but in the seaport towns of every great maritime country there are roving spirits ready to sail for high pay under any flag, who cannot be regarded as morally committing the nation, even in the slightest degree, to any bad enterprise in which they embark. Moreover the English seamen of this vessel were for the most part taken on board for a feigned voyage. The Alabama was welcomed and cheered by her partisans, and not in the ports of English dependencies alone. Could she have put into Manchester or Bradford, or the artisan quarters of London, she would have been received with execration by the masses of our people. That the British Government showed her any sort of favor in our ports, so as to convict itself of "complicity" in her depredations, is an insinuation for which I will say with confidence there is not a shadow of foundation.

But I am not going now to discuss the case of the Alabama, with all its controverted and irritating details. For the settlement of that case your Government has proposed and ours has accepted the principle of arbitration, the only fair and reasonable mode of terminating international disputes, the only war of the civilization of the future. The arbitrators will pass judgment on Mr. Sumner's allegations, on his theory of consequential damages, and every other question involved in the great cause. We are now virtually in court, and the less said or written by irresponsible controversialists before the pleadings commence the better. If the late treaty was not so framed as fully to answer all the ends of justice, I rejoice that it was rejected. I rejoice that it was rejected if it failed to recognize any principle of international law or morality, which ought to have been recognized, though it would seem that the principle of liabil-

ity was fully recognized by the submission to arbitration. Honor knows no limit to concession but that of justice. My only desire as an Englishman is, that England may pay to the uttermost farthing any debt which, upon any sane theory, she can have incurred, and thus stand clear before the world and in the hearts of her own people. I trust also, that if it is made to appear before an impartial tribunal that our Government has failed, however unintentionally, in the performance of any of its international duties to a friendly power, the payment of damages will be accompanied with a full acknowledgment of the error. But if Mr. Sumner means to thrust arbitration aside—if he means to insist on being judge in his own cause, on pronouncing us guilty of any crime which his inflamed fancy can suggest, and fining and humiliating us at his discretion—we shall appeal with confidence to the reason and moral sense of the civilized world.

Mr. Henry Adams, in *The North American Review*, says, of the Alabama treaty, that if England could have foreseen that she would have to consent to it, she would have closed with the French proposal of intervention. This is at least a proof that the treaty was conceded by the English Government in good faith. Your Ambassador duly authorized came to us to negotiate for the settlement of the Alabama claim. We could not in any case have looked behind his credentials and inquired whether he had enough political support for us to treat with him; but in this case he had been unanimously confirmed by the Senate, as we understood, with this very mission in view. He proposed terms to which the British Government acceded without abatement: he proposed to alter his terms, and the British Government acceded in like manner to the alterations. The treaty was in effect framed at Washington, and this fact disposes practically of any suspicion that the Ambassador was corrupted by his reception in England—a reception which I think on the part of the Tories was undignified, but on the part of the people was perfectly consistent and perfectly sincere. Neither when Mr. Johnson went out, nor while the negotiations were in progress on a basis which seems to have been no secret, does Mr. Sumner appear to have uttered a word of warning as to Mr. Johnson's competency to treat with us, or as to the propriety of the basis on which he was treating. When the whole process had been gone through, the portals of the Senate House were thrown open, that all the world might see, and the treaty was flung out of doors with contumely, amid a burst of hostility and menace against Great Britain. The Senator who was the organ of that assembly on the occasion did not even acknowledge by one courteous word the humiliating position in which, by the act of his own Ambassador, the British Government had been placed. Mr. Reverdy Johnson may have given offense here by his demeanor on his mission. It does not become me to make any remarks upon that subject; but in that case surely the object of public resentment ought to have been Mr. Reverdy Johnson.

The impression seems to prevail that the English press in not giving Mr. Sumner's speech in full (which it is said not to have done), has been influenced by a fear of its possible effect upon the minds of our people. If I know anything of the English people, the Government, to rouse

them to unanimous resistance, has only to circulate that speech throughout the land. A whole nation is there accused of entering into a conspiracy for the subversion of a friendly power, of protecting and encouraging piracy, of itself sending out pirates, of lending treacherous aid, in contravention of its professed principles, to the most immoral of all causes, and told that it has righteously incurred immeasurable penalties, both in the way of fine and humiliation. Does Mr. Sumner think he is declaiming against some monster of history, who is dead, and can feel no more, or does he know that he is pouring insults into living hearts? I have not felt such a sense of wrong since I read the libels on America in some English newspapers at the time of the civil war. But those libels were the work of anonymons and irresponsible writers, whose calumnies cannot touch the honor of man or nation; this is the speech of the organ of the Senate delivered with the concurrence of all his colleagues but one. Insults are not less bitter when they are followed by professions of a desire for concord, which, coming in the train of insults, becomes an insult in itself; nor is the sting taken out of the threat of war by putting it into the mouths of other persons, while the orator himself plays the fine part of the Archangel of Peace. I am persuaded that the treaty might have been rejected without causing irritation in England, and that negotiations might have been renewed in a perfectly amicable spirit, and with a cordial desire to give you satisfaction on the part of the British nation, if the organ of your Senate had been a speaker ~~less~~ unconscious of the existence of self-respect and sensitiveness to honor in other men.

I told you, my friends, at the commencement of my address that it was a rash undertaking which you sanctioned by your presence here; and of all the things which I have said perhaps this is the only thing which has commanded your assent. I hope never to speak again on any controverted question bordering on politics. My short public life, if it can be dignified with that name, has been bounded by the American struggle and the struggle for the extension of the suffrage in England, which was closely connected with the American struggle, and has been greatly influenced by its result. Nor did I come forward in the American struggle until English parties had been fairly drawn into the conflict and there was danger lest the enemies of the Union should succeed in inducing England to interfere in favor of the Confederates. I regarded the war, at the outset, with horror, and it was not my business to urge on other people to shed their blood. My first speech in public was made against the Alabama; this, I trust, will be my last. I repeat that there is no living Englishman who has more reason to be grateful and attached to America than I have, but a man's attachment to an adopted country is worthless if he has no regard for the honor of his own.







